

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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JACK DOYLE'S DAUGHTER.

BY R. E. FRANCILLON.

PART II. PHOEBE'S FATHERS.

CHAPTER IV. CHANGE FOR AN ARCH-DEACON.

"BASSETT!"

"Lawrence!"

"By Jove, old fellow, who'd have thought of seeing you?"

"The same to you, old fellow. But we must look sharp, if we don't mean to be left behind. Here's an empty first-class—in with you!"

They were two young men who had just crossed from Boulogne to Folkestone, and had just managed not to be too late for the same train to town. Lawrence was plain-featured, lean, and bronzed; Bassett was not unlike that namesake of his who had, a generation ago, lived in Gray's Inn Square, only his style was less languid and more manly. They had settled themselves comfortably, and had taken out their cigar-cases, when, just as the train was under way, another late passenger found just time to throw himself into an opposite corner.

"Do you mind our smoking, sir, as this is not a smoking compartment?" asked Bassett politely, and pausing while in the act of lighting. "I'm rather particular, you see, about my fellow-travellers' tobacco, and always smoke where other people mustn't, whenever I can."

His easiness and readiness of address were also characteristic of that Charley Bassett who he could not possibly be, unless, indeed, time had stood even more still with the amateur Bohemian than it had done with the admiral. The stranger's eyes rested upon him rather curiously for a

moment before he answered indifferently: "It won't make any difference to me," and then betook himself to the pastime of looking out of window. The two young men noticed that he was an uncommonly tall and powerfully-built man well on into middle age, with a large beard of mingled brown, red, and grey, and a complexion more deeply bronzed than that of Lawrence, but as he looked grave, heavy, and ungenial, and was evidently in no humour for talk, they soon ceased to notice a presence which would not, in any case, have been a restraint upon theirs.

"If I'd been asked where you were, Lawrence," said Bassett, "I should have said India, and if I'd been asked what part of India, I should have pleaded Not Guilty of geography. You've not been out there very long? I'm glad to see you, anyhow. All right, I hope? By Jove, barring the brown, I should know you anywhere."

"It's as odd as it's lucky, old fellow, my tumbling over you the first hour of my coming home. But how was it we didn't meet on board the boat?"

"Why, for the best of all reasons. I was—but don't ask me to speak of it. I always am. My notion of absolute misery is being on board a small steamboat in a rolling sea for two deadly hours. It's an ignominious confession to make to a fellow like you, but I really am a splendid sailor—on shore. Why don't you engineering fellows get that tunnel done?"

"And what are you doing with yourself? No—I don't mean smoking. I see that, but——"

"Oh, nothing very particular. I've just been walking up a Swiss hill or two with Aubrey. I walked him off his legs, and he walked me off mine. Aubrey of

Merton, you know. I left him in Paris, risking his chance of a fellowship by mooning about with his prettiest cousin. He's a good fellow, though, all the same."

"You missed your chance, of course, in the regular way?"

"Quite in the regular way. The governor made a fuss about loss of time and money, but he never means much when he talks like that, and as soon as he'd paid the bills he was just the same as ever. I'm hanging out in town, just now. I'm supposed to be reading for the woosack."

"Going to the bar? You?"

"That's the governor's idea. Of course, I sha'n't practice, but the governor has his notions, and — between you and me, Lawrence—I think he wants to be able to keep an eye on my goings on. I proposed I should go into Capel's chambers—Capel of Trinity, you know—he's got no briefs, but I'd sooner idle about with him than any man I know, barring you. However, the governor asked about Capel, and as he couldn't hear anything about him from anybody except me, he sent me to an old friend of his own, a priggish sort of a Scotchman, named Urquhart, who's said to be going to be a judge some day. He is a judge already—of old port, but that's the only thing I like in him. So I turn up at his chambers once a week if I've got nothing better to do, and I don't think the governor knows anything more about me than if he'd given the hundred guineas to Capel. Queer fellows the friends of the governor's youth must have been, if Urquhart's a specimen! I'm going to town now, for the beginning of term. Where are you going to put up? Will you take a shakedown with me? I'll try and show you a thing or two—if everything isn't tame to a fellow that's been sticking pigs and shooting tigers, or punkahs, or whatever you call them out there."

"I've never shot a punkah. By Jove, you're a lucky dog—only an hour or two of work a week, if you feel inclined for it, and a governor who'll pay all your back debts without so much as winking! Mine didn't. He told me to go and wipe off the score off my own bat."

"Why, he must have been another of the governor's youthful friends. That was a d—well, it wasn't nice of him, anyway. Well, we'll talk about that another time. I am born with a silver spoon, and what's the good of a spoon but to help one's friends? I was telling you about Urquhart. He makes, I should say, four

or five thousand a year at least, and I don't believe his tailor gets a ten-pound note out of the scramble. And he travels on penny boats and knife-boards. You don't have fellows like that out in India, I know."

"Well," said Lawrence, "barring the archdeacon—no."

"The archdeacon? Oh, a parson—parsons are different, you know."

"But the archdeacon isn't a parson. Why he's called the 'archdeacon' nobody knows, unless it's because he isn't like one. But then they might just as well have called him a bishop at once. Archdeacon isn't a common nickname for a man. You've never heard of the archdeacon? Why, he's one of the characters of Bengal."

"What does he do? You see we're not in the way of hearing much about Bengal—except that it's hot, and grows curry-powder. In what way is this famous archdeacon queer?"

"In every way," said Lawrence. "He's been out some twenty years, and has never been home. He's never even taken a holiday, or been to the hills. He was never seen speaking to a woman under fifty years old; and we haven't many old women to speak to. He didn't come out in the service, but in the newspaper line; and, somehow, he's managed to get rich, while other fellows find it a stiff thing to save a rupee for themselves, let alone their duns," he added with a sigh. "I don't know what he makes, but it's a big thing; nor quite how he makes it; but he's so well known, that I shrewdly suspect him of plucking game better worth it than I am. Maybe I'll try the experiment some day, when sixty per cent. mayn't hurt me so much as it would now, or when things get too tight to manage any other way. And all the time they say he doesn't spend three thousand a year—rupees, I mean; three hundred pounds. And think of that in India! He must be a regular Jew—perhaps he is one; and for all his money-making he's never been known to give away a brass sou, or to subscribe to anything. In fact, though men don't know him personally, or don't want to seem to, he's famous for being the meanest beast in all Bengal."

"And may I ask," said a deep slow voice from the corner by the opposite window, "if you are personally acquainted with the archdeacon?"

"I? no," said Lawrence, a little stiffly, and rather put out by this interruption on the part of a stranger whose presence had been

clean forgotten. "I've never even seen him."

"Then let me advise you," said the stranger quietly, "not to judge by hearsay of men whom you do not know. I do know the archdeacon, as you call him. And—though he is no favourite of my own—I know enough to know that you are blaming him for what are not his faults, and leaving his real faults unblamed. He's got real ones enough; nobody knows that better than I. But——"

"I'm sure I beg your pardon, sir," said Lawrence, frankly enough. "I like to hear a man stand up for his friends behind their backs; it isn't too common. And I'm glad to hear the archdeacon has got a friend to stand up for him. I certainly don't know him, so I daresay you're right and I'm wrong. I was only talking common gossip. Is it long, may I ask, since you were in Bengal? Try one of my cheroots, Bassett."

"I was in India a month ago," said the stranger. "And, if I may ask a question," he asked abruptly, "I have just heard you call your friend by a name that once meant a great deal to me. And your face too," he went on, turning to the other, "reminded me of your name as soon as I saw you. Can you be any relation to Bassett—Charley Bassett, we used to call him—who once lived in Gray's Inn? But you wouldn't know anything about that: it must have been before you were born."

The young man was not yet old enough to mistrust, on principle, a casual stranger in a railway-carriage who claims old acquaintance with one's family; nor, for that matter, was this stranger's manner of a nature to inspire distrust in any ordinary mind. He spoke with real interest, and without any touch of the geniality which puts the prudent on their guard.

"My name is Bassett; and my father's name is Charles—Sir Charles Bassett, of Cautleigh Hall. Did you ever know him? Perhaps I may have heard him mention you?"

"You are strangely like my old friend; but he was not the baronet, nor likely to be. There was a Sir Mordaunt Bassett, and my friend was some sort of a cousin——"

"My father succeeded Sir Mordaunt: though only a cousin, as you say, there were some unexpected deaths which made him the next heir."

"I see And Urquhart; that was another name that we both used to know. So Charley Bassett has become a baronet, and Urquhart a great lawyer?

Things seem a trifle changed, all round Yes, Mr. Bassett; I did know your father, better than I knew most men, before you were born, and when he no more thought of being Sir Charles Bassett than I do of being—Sir John. It's odd I never knew it; but I don't know—it isn't odd, when I come to think of it, at all. The odd thing is, that the first face I have seen in England should be Charley Bassett's son. Did you ever hear your father speak of Jack Doyle?"

"Well, no; I can't say I ever did," said young Bassett, after a slight attempt to remember the name. "But my father must have had lots of friends of whom I never heard. And I have no memory for names. I shall never make a case lawyer."

"Nor of Dick Esdaile? Nor of Ronaine?"

"Never."

"Well, things do seem a trifle changed. You mean to say you never heard the story of the child with six fathers?"

Young Bassett stared, as well he might; and his friend Lawrence followed his example, though less openly.

"I never heard the story of the child with six fathers," said he. "I say, Lawrence, that must be an uncommonly wise child, if the saying's true." It seemed to him unlikely that a story of unknown date, connecting his father with an uncertain number of old friends and so remarkable a child, should turn out either pleasant or amusing, and his original respect for the size, strength, and quiet bearing of his fellow-traveller was beginning to be touched with very natural suspicion. "I suppose," he said, without any of the cordiality due to one's father's old friends, "I suppose that you are one of those names—Ronaine, Esdaile, or Jack Doyle?"

"I am Jack Doyle. I should think Sir Charles Bassett will remember my—name. But, as he has never mentioned it, never mind."

And then he fell back into silence, which continued till the train reached London, and a formal "Good-evening" parted him from the two young men.

"That seemed a queer customer, Lawrence," said Ralph Bassett.

Ralph was his christian name—a common one among the Bassetts of Lincolnshire for many generations.

"You're right. The governor does seem to have known a few queer fish when he was young. But I suppose we all do before we settle down."

"Queer? Queerer than you think, old fellow, by a long way."

"Why—what do you mean?"

"You noticed how he stuck up for the archdeacon? That was queer to begin with. And then how he got so interested in your father that he fell off his guard; for he was on his guard. As he told you his name, why didn't he say at once, 'I'm the archdeacon,' like a man? Didn't I happen to tell you that that infernal money-lending vermin's name is Doyle—John Doyle, alias the archdeacon, alias the deuce knows what besides? Yes, he's all that, and I didn't put things half strong enough in the train; but I do now. And what's he doing in England at last, and asking after Charles Bassett, and half losing his head when he hears your father has become a baronet and the richest commoner in Lincolnshire? And those other men he named—other poor devils, no doubt, whom he once had under his thumb, and may also have got to be worth hunting up again after all these years? And asking you about a child with six fathers—it doesn't mean nothing, you may be sure. Of course, it'll be all right, but, all the same, old fellow, drop a line to Lincolnshire, and let it be: 'Ware archdeacons—look out for squalls.'"

"Are you in earnest, Lawrence? Nonsense. What should my father know of a usurer from Bengal?"

"Nonsense, a hundred to one; but there's the one chance it mayn't be. Of course, it will be all right. Your father, I suppose, is rich enough to snap his fingers; but then that sort of snapping attracts flies and sharks too. Perhaps your father may have borrowed a hundred or two in old times—who knows?"

"I wish I'd asked him," said Ralph, "to tell me the story of the child. No, I don't, though—it would have been like pumping and spying. I'll ask the governor if he knows what it means. You are a bit of an old woman, Lawrence, now and then. There isn't one of my name who has a ghost of a cause to be afraid of a living man, except of an examiner in the schools."

"But there's no man of any name," said Lawrence, "who hasn't had cause to be afraid of a woman, and you can't have a story of a child without having a story of a woman——"

"Of an old woman, and that's yourself," said Ralph Bassett. "Come, let's talk sense. You shall feed with me at the club,

and then I'll introduce you to the prettiest little dancer——"

"Ralph Bassett, does your father know?"

"Don't be an ass, Lawrence. 'Does your mother know you're out?' is a street-question that went out of date in London ages ago. I'm sorry to think it survives in Bengal. Come along."

"Your father does not know everything about his son: and yet you tell me that you must needs know everything about your father. Did he never hear the chimes at midnight, do you suppose? But, as you very sensibly say, 'come along,' and, if he never did, with the help of Shylock, we will."

He who, unlike Ralph Bassett, is able to carry his memory about a generation back, will be at some loss to identify the John Doyle who had left so curious a reputation in India, with that Jack Doyle who had once represented the back-slums of Bohemian London. For the hopeless, aimless, penniless, shiftless sot to develop into a well-dressed, sober, healthy, middle-aged gentleman, with a reputation for too successful usury, was a process of evolution, or rather revolution, that seemed to require at least two eternities and a meeting of the poles, with three or four miracles thrown in. Had Charley Bassett's son ever heard his father speak of Jack Doyle, he could not have hesitated for a moment before setting down his chance fellow-traveller as the most flagrant of impostors. And yet, so unconscious are we of the changes which take place in ourselves, however unnatural and extravagant they may seem, that it was the everyday commonplace development of an amateur dilettante Bohemian into a baronet and the father of a grown-up son, that struck John Doyle as really remarkable.

"And yet," he thought to himself, as he next morning set out to walk in a northerly direction from his hotel in Covent Garden, "I suppose I was fool enough in my heart to fancy I should find everything standing stock still. I wonder if I really believed that I should find Charley, and Esdaile, and Urquhart, and Ronaine, still gambling for millions in Gray's Inn Square? I believe that was what I expected to find. And so, Esdaile and Ronaine may be on the other side of the earth, if they're not under it, and Urquhart is going to be a judge, and Charley Bassett is a rich baronet, with a son old enough to take up life at the point where I left the father. I wonder what makes me feel as if he'd changed

in more than in that way? No; Charley Bassett wasn't the man to be silent about his friends. And never to have told the story of that child—the link that was to keep us all bound together, wherever we might be! Whatever has become of the others she ought to be flourishing, that girl, with one of her fathers making a fortune at the bar, and another with thousands a year. Why, my miserable allowance must have been a mere drop in the well. Ronaine's right, she ought to be the most accomplished young woman in London. I have it—by George! Charley is keeping her dark out of fear for his son. Yes, if that young man came across any objectionable young woman, there might be the devil to pay before it was all done. Any man can be turned round any woman's thumb, of course; but that young fellow, to judge from his cut, could be turned round any schoolgirl's little finger. No; maybe, if I were in his boat, I shouldn't care to introduce my son and heir to an accomplished young woman who had been picked up by chance in Gray's Inn Gardens, till she was safely married, anyhow, and maybe not even then . . . I wonder how other men feel, who've been spending a quarter of a life abroad, without making a friend, and come home again at last to find no hand to welcome them; not so much as an enemy's to be raised against them. . . . No, I don't. I wonder what men feel who come back to find welcome, and love, and home? My old garret and starvation were better than this sort of thing. And then they abuse me for being fond of money; as if one wouldn't be fond of the ugliest thing on earth, if it was the only creature that stuck to one, and the only creature one had to live for. Aren't they fond of money themselves? But then it isn't the one only thing to others that it is to me. Well, one woman has once done one good thing. She's sobered a sot, and made a money-maker out of a madman. I suppose gold and water does make a wholesomer drink than the other thing. I'll make enough to found a hospital for poor devils who don't deserve helping, men who've come to grief by their own faults and their own follies—aren't faults and follies the biggest misfortunes of all? And I'll make myself the first pensioner, and write a series of sermons on the text about vanity. . . . Some broken-down vagabond will be safe to stick to me like a dog, so that I shan't go out of the world without some sort of a shake of the hand,

though I daresay of a dirty one. . . . Now, where am I going? I'm hanged if it isn't the old road to Gray's Inn; as if I should find a soul there!"

His conscious and coherent manner of thinking argued the man who lives so much alone as to have nobody but himself to talk to. The quarter could by rights have no sort of sentimental charm for him; and yet he lingered. The memory of a garret, in defiance of right, has more than a sentimental charm to the man who has once been driven to live in one, at least so soon as he is driven to live in one no longer. The very smell of Holborn recalled hundreds of hideous memories, and yet with something of the pathetic suggestiveness of stocks and wall-flowers upon sensitive nerves.

"I'll look in a Law List and look up Urquhart," said he. "He'll be somewhere in the Temple, I suppose. From what I heard in the train, we're like to have the sympathy of twin gold grubbers, he and I. And I shall hear how the land lies with Charley; and I may as well hear how that child's turned out after all, though she is a girl. I'm glad she's got a baronet for one father and a coming judge for another. That hospital for undeserving incapables will get twenty pounds a year more. I wish I'd known sooner. Let me see, twenty pounds a year and interest; I might have saved nearly five hundred pounds, instead of, at my time of life, throwing it away on a girl; a fine lady, no doubt, who spends five pounds a quarter on gloves and ribbons. However, I mustn't complain," he thought, with a sigh. "I should never have made my first five-pound note but for her. Whatever I am now, I'm what she's made me. Yes; I'll look up Urquhart. Maybe Esdaile or Ronaine may turn out good subjects for that hospital, especially Ronaine. I wonder if they've found it as hard to keep up their twenty pounds a year as I used to do; or if the fight has ended with them as it has with me?"

IN THE SUNNY RHINELAND.

VII.

EVEN when the sun has finally disappeared behind the hills, and twilight has settled over the river, there is little of the cool of the evening to be experienced. The breeze that meets the boat is warm and languid, even opposite the noted Wisper Valley, where it is said a keen treacherous wind is always blowing. Even there the temperature is still tropical. It

is easy to realise that we are in a volcanic country; heat radiates from the warm-tinted rocks. Nothing would surprise us in the way of manifestations of subterranean fires, a thick column of smoke rising from a distant peak, or a mild earthquake sending a thrill through the vine-clad hills. Such things would be thoroughly seasonable, and would quite correspond with the scenery; for there is something essentially hot and sulphurous about a vineyard, and we are now surrounded by vineyards.

Assmanshausen to the left, whose red wines need only to be known to be admired, and presently a final bend of the river, and the classic hills of Rüdesheim are in sight; and for those who love distilled sunshine and the true aroma of the grape, what can be better than a good bottle of Rüdesheimer Berg? We are content to bake, to frizzle, if our sufferings are for the good of the basking vines; if only this year of grace, eighteen eighty-one, may be known as the great vintage year—the comet year in fact—for surely between the fiery messenger in the skies and the slumbering fires beneath, and those parched-looking vines, that are really not parched, but enjoying the sublimest ecstasy of which vine-life is capable, there is some subtle sympathetic tie which comes to full fruition in the happy vintage, and of which fortunate mortals may catch the essence to seal it up in casks and bottles. Ten years hence may we all meet under the shadow of the Rüdesheimer Berg, and drink sundry bottles of the celebrated eighty-one, when we may say with pride, “we, too, have suffered that you might be perfect.”

The value of the true vine terrain, and the limited extent of it, are shown in the extraordinary pains taken to preserve every inch of it for cultivation. The steep hill-sides are a network of walls and terraces, the barren rock cropping up here and there, and the vine-growing soil hanging on to the rocky backbone in a way that one would think the first heavy thunder shower would wash all clean away. Only then you see the care with which the bare little ravines and crevices have been kept clear for the speedy decanting of all such excessive rainfall into the river. One would like to know something of the local laws and customs that regulate this marvellous commonwealth of vineyards, among which there must be relics of hoar antiquity. Indeed, one of the most charming legends of the Rhine relates how Charlemagne,

from his favourite palace at Ingelheim, a few miles higher up the river, noticed how every winter the snow melted almost as fast as it fell from the sun-warmed shoulder of the Rüdesheimer Berg, and how, taking tent of this, he sent for vines from his not sunnier dominions south of the Loire, and planted them forthwith on the favoured spot.

It is characteristic of the Rhine, and tends to confirm Mrs. John's impression that the whole is a painted scene cunningly devised for the benefit of tourists and those who make their living out of them, that at Bingen everything comes suddenly to an end. Cliffs and crags, and terraced steeps and wood-crowned heights,

And chiefless castles breathing stern farewells
From grey but leafy walls where Ruin greenly dwells.

all come to an end suddenly. Our charming sceptic declares that at Bingen she can make out the poles that support the panorama, and the back of the canvas, raw and unpainted, with flapping corners. We have passed through the enchanted country, and the river now assumes an ordinary work-a-day aspect. It runs in front of Bingen as straight as a canal, and in front of us is a straight up-and-down uncompromising block of a hill, respectable on account of its vineyards, but otherwise rather stiff, as if done by a 'prentice hand with uncertain notions as to drawing.

I don't know why we should stay at Bingen, except that our fathers stayed there before us; and, after all, we might have done worse in the way of hotels, for we get an excellent dinner served on the shady terrace, and very good wine. And there seems a good deal of national life about Bingen: the peasant women with their great winged caps, the men bearded and antique, driving their quaint creaking carts, drawn by small patient oxen, with the graceful outlines and delicate fawnlike shading of an unsophisticated race.

Perhaps, had we taken the river the other way, and travelled downwards, we might have found Bingen sufficiently charming. As it is, we are a little unsettled as to the future. John vaguely talks of pushing on to Baden, leaving the womankind there, and doing a few days' pedestrianising in the Black Forest. I listen, grimly unresponsive. I have secret doubts as to being able to get upstairs to bed to-night. That wretched foot of mine—the cobblestones of Coblenz gave it a final coup de grâce; it has taken to swelling now. I

have a vague feeling that amputation may ultimately be necessary; in the meantime I am as lame as a tree. Hitherto I have kept the matter pretty much to myself. I know the kind of sympathy in misfortune one gets from travelling companions, only, as I cannot go on any farther, it is now necessary to come to some kind of explanation. I won't till John is out of the way—gone to find out the post-office—and then I expound the matter to the two young women. It has come to this: we must part company. They can go on where they please. As for me, I shall take a cabin in the first Netherlands boat that comes down, and—

"You will do nothing so foolish," interposed Mrs. John. "You will be asphyxiated on the passage; and it is not acting en bon camarade to run away like that. The only plan is for John to tramp about his Black Forest by himself, while you stay with us at Baden and rest."

I reply that I shall never reach Baden alive. Why, it's hundreds of miles to Baden!

And then Madame Reimer interposes. She is a soldier's daughter, and had plenty of experience of all kinds, young as she was, during the war. For want of a better adviser, would I permit her to diagnose the wound?

"But, gracious, Gabrielle!" cried Mrs. John, "how are you going to manage it? You can't examine his leg on the terrace, nor yet in the public room."

"I shall visit my patient in his own room, of course," replied Madame Reimer calmly. "The claims of humanity are paramount."

Mrs. John shrugged her shoulders and looked unconvinced.

But Madame Reimer was as good as her word. By-and-by there was a decided rap at my door, and she entered, with scissors and a roll of bandages in her hand. Her hair was all pushed back out of the way, and a handkerchief tied about it and under her chin, giving her a nunlike but certainly attractive appearance. Behind her was a chambermaid with a jug of hot water—a tall, fair, sympathetic chambermaid, who looked as grieved as if I were going to have my leg cut off.

Madame Reimer manipulated the limb with firm but delicate touch. Then she beckoned to the maid, and between them they bathed the foot in vinegar and warm water. A handkerchief, dipped in some cooling lotion, was next applied, and the whole quickly and skilfully bandaged up.

"Is it easier now, my friend?" asked Madame Reimer, surveying me complacently, as one in whom she had an interest.

Everything was delightfully easy, except my mind, which was overburdened with gratitude.

"But a week's perfect rest is absolutely necessary," continued Madame Reimer. "The foot to be kept up all the time. You are not too grateful for that, perhaps, monsieur?"

"And you will leave me to my fate, I suppose, to-morrow?" I say discontentedly.

"But perhaps not," replied Madame Reimer. "We don't always abandon a friend because he has need of our little services. But we will talk over all that to-morrow. Sleep well, my friend, and then your cure will be well commenced."

And with that she left me, but not to sleep.

The air was hot and heavy, and fever burnt in my veins; the borderland between waking and sleeping was peopled with vague but horrid shapes, to which the outside world contributed an appropriate accompaniment of harsh and dismal sounds. All night long people were making up trains under the windows, banging waggons together, shunting into sidings, sending hoarse and frantic engines roaring to and fro. Then a steamer on the river would explode with fierce volleys of steam, and with a loud "Booho!" awoke all the echoes for miles around. And all these noises mixed themselves up with my fevered visions in a bewildering chaos of indefinite misery, as if I were under the spell of some everlasting curse.

Daylight broke the spell, however—daylight and the cheery voice of an English stoker swearing copiously in our dear native tongue. I know that he was a stoker, because I crawled to the window and saw him start at the head of that enormous luggage-train they had been banging about all night long, his legs hanging over his fire-box, as he gaily anathematised all the stationary officials of the line. I blessed him silently for having put my own thoughts into more striking and picturesque language than I could have compassed, and creeping back to bed, slept till past six o'clock, when John came thundering into the room, with an affectation of moving softly on tiptoe.

"What, you are awake, then?" he cried.

"Well, you've just awoken me."

"Ah!" rejoined John, throwing himself upon my sofa, "lucky beggar to be able to

sleep at all. I haven't slept a wink. Quite in a high fever, and pulse going anyhow. Madame Reimer says—and she's a deuced clever woman that, knows as much as a doctor of medicine—she says that if we don't seek a cooler climate at once we shall all be ill."

I admit that I also am panting for cooler air.

And presently, after John has left me, my kind nurse appears, with the compassionate chambermaid, to renew the dressings on my foot.

"I have thought of the very place for us all," said Madame Reimer. And she went on to explain that at Cologne she had received a letter from a once very dear friend, Madame de Beaulieu.

The husband of this old and dear friend had, it appeared, been suffering from an inflamed state of the foot and ankle, for which he had been recommended the baths of Schlangenbad. The name seemed familiar, but at the moment I failed to recall the associations connected with it. But a glance at "Baedeker" explained it all. Schlangenbad—the serpent's bath. Yes, that is one of the places commemorated in those dear old Bubbles that were the delight of our early days. It is like meeting unexpectedly with an old familiar friend. Not that one recalls anything definite about the place, unless it be the old man who lived under the bath-house, and kept snakes in bottles, and had invented a leech barometer, but he must have joined his fathers years ago; but there is a general impression of pleasant country, enlivening air, and a quaint simplicity and homeliness, that makes us feel that not only shall we be glad to see Schlangenbad, but that, somehow, Schlangenbad will be glad to see us.

"The only thing now," cries Madame Reimer, delighted that her suggestion is so well appreciated—"the only thing now, is to persuade Monsieur Jean that it is his particular wish to go to Schlangenbad."

A little judicious coaching, and John is led to believe that he has discovered the place himself, and consequently he is warm in its behalf.

"Eight hundred and twenty-six feet above the sea-level, and refreshed by a constant invigorating current of air."

We smack our lips involuntarily over that invigorating current of air.

Only Madame Jean is not quite satisfied.

"I am sure it is a dowdy kind of place, resorted to by cripples," with a vindictive

glance in my direction, which I felt to be rather cruel; and cruelty is uncalled for, since I am as much as ever her slave, only, naturally, a slave with but one available leg isn't worth much.

We are to go on by boat at eleven o'clock; we could hardly compass anything earlier, we are too languid and pumped out. We pant in shady corners, and talk intermittently to the Bingenites, who are gloating over the tropical weather, and predict a fortunate vintage.

And then we make our way to the river, crossing the railway line, where the people are already beginning to make up another luggage-train for the entertainment of to-night's batch of tourists.

The steamer is almost empty. Where are the crowds of yesterday? Where are our American friends? Where Mumm and the rest? Where are the leaves of last autumn?

A solitary English tourist, with a knapsack, sits munching cherries under the awning; a few peasants occupy the fore part of the boat.

The waiters must have immolated each other, and the one survivor makes pencil-marks gloomily in a little note-book, indifferent to the trifling orders of the moment.

The river has widened out into a comparatively placid stream, with pastures on either hand, and willows and alders on the banks, pleasant green islands between, and soft hills fading in the distance.

We are now in the very paradise of the wine culture. These low undulating hills produce some of the finest and rarest of wines. That heavy barrack schloss on the slope, a couple of miles from the river, crowns the famous Johannisberg, and the contents of its cellars would ransom all the kings in Christendom—aye, and the emperors too! That arid-looking dust-heap is the birthplace of the renowned Steinberg Cabinet; while a little to the left are the wonderful Marcobrunner, whose springs are of the divinest nectar.

We have serious thoughts of binding John to the mast, he grows so enthusiastic over the wines. We are afraid he will jump into a boat that comes alongside, and sail away in quest of the long-necked syrens. But, happily, we reach our port at Eltville without losing sight of our Ulysses. And Eltville looks hot and dusty enough in the broiling mid-day sun, with a solitary one-horse drosky baking there, just by the steamboat pier.

Now we ought to go to Schlangenbad—I recall enough of my Bubbles to know

that—in a postchaise with a postillion with worsted tassels, who blows a horn as he nears a village.

But, alas, the breed is extinct. You might as well look for a chaise or a post-boy on the Great North Road.

A fly is the alternative—a fly drawn by two lean horses, and with a tariff of fares on a big card lying on the cushions.

Had I to do the thing again, I should cross from Bingen by ferry to Rüdesheim, and then by train and corresponding diligence to Schlangenbad. But we thought we should be hot and crowded in the diligence, which starts from the railway station, and for which railway passengers have the priority.

At first the drive is hot and dusty; all through vineyards, the road rising gradually to a higher plateau, where a superior wine is grown; and, indeed, we skirt the vineyards of the Rauenthal district, which, though not so famous, produces a wine almost equal to the Marcobrunner. But vineyards are arid disappointing objects taken in the mass, and we are glad presently to pass out of the belt of wine country and into pleasant woodland shades. The way follows the course of a tiny limpid stream, enclosed in emerald woods, and cherry and walnut trees in groves border the road on either hand. We draw long breaths of the cool pure air. We are beginning to revive already—to chirp like birds after a thunderstorm. The road climbs higher and higher, and the breeze grows fresher and fresher. We pass through one charming little village with a gabled inn projecting over the road. A tinker is at work in the shade, and all the children of the village are bringing pots and pans to be mended from every quarter. The swart dusky fellow, with his glowing braziers, surrounded by a clamorous tribe of children, seems angered rather than rejoiced at the extent of damaged tin-ware. Surely he does not take the whole village by contract?

At last the valley opens out a little, and white buildings glitter among the trees, and then we are among tall hotels and big boarding-houses, all pleasantly surrounded by trees. There is no village; not the vestige of a shop; only pleasant grounds carefully laid out, and a border of tall houses on either side of the ravine. But still we go higher and higher, till at last, when we seem to have come to the very top of the ravine, and to be in danger of rolling over on the other side, the carriage

stops. The coachman points with his whip and mutters gutturally: "Nassauer Hof," and explanatorily, "Gasthaus." We have halted by the side of a wide covered piazza, projecting from a big white quadrangular building, well covered with creepers however, and surrounded by flower-beds; covered walks communicate with other white buildings, shining out from the greenery about them. Fountains plash, and a tall single spout of water, like that in the Temple Gardens, only many times higher, sends a refreshing spray almost to our feet. But no human life is visible; the grounds are deserted. There are tables spread in the shaded piazza, with snowy linen and silver and glittering crystal; but not a living creature is to be seen.

We should think the place deserted but for a confused murmur of voices, which wells from the open windows of a great salle behind the piazza, mingled with a sharp clatter and clash, as if it were a big kindergarten school, with an object-lesson going on in the way of dishes and plates.

"Mittagsmahl," growls our coachman again, meaning that it is dinner-time, and whistles shrilly to attract attention. Somebody comes at last; a courteous polyglot person, who, attacking us first in German, glides off into Russian, next into Greek, I think—at all events it is Greek to me—and then, touching lightly on French, comes at last to good conversational English. Yes, there are rooms, happily, for us, and in the Neubau, a cool sequestered building in the upper part of the grounds. Everything, indeed, is delightfully cool after the broiling heat of the Rhine valley; with a pleasant sound of trickling waters, a subdued hum of insect life, and the soft chirping of birds.

My own room is a perfect paradise of coolness, looking out on a green bank with shaded footpaths running upwards to the woods. And the invigorating current of air we have been promised is no delusion, happily, but comes freshly in at the open windows, waving the clean white curtains, and causing a pleasant rustle among books and papers. And it is a comfort, too, to come to an anchor for awhile, to scatter one's belongings here and there, without the painful thought that they will probably be forgotten in packing up next morning. But one thing is wanting to perfect content. The ripple and splash of waters seem to irresistibly invite one's parched and dusty cuticle to a bath. And so I hobble forth, and am directed to

the new Kurhaus, which lies in the hollow across the road.

The general bathing-time is over, and most of the bath-rooms are vacant, but my notion of having a bath then and there is received almost with horror by the attendants. There is a preliminary registering and ticket-getting which can by no means be dispensed with, but where the tickets are to be gotten is not at all clear to my bemuddled perceptions. Your upper, and middle, and under Kurhausen are bewildering to a stranger, and I sink helplessly upon a bench in the grounds, and anathematise the bureaucratic spirit as applied to bath-houses.

Presently I notice an intermittent stream of black-coated men in tall hats making for the upper part of the grounds, all with cases under their arms, and it strikes me that these are the disjointed members of the band. I let pass the brass and wind instruments, and accost an amiable-looking man who carries a violin-case.

As I anticipated, he is a kind-hearted man, who takes some pains to guide me into the very bureau where the tickets are conceded to applicants, and this is in the upper Kurhaus, a good way from the other baths. But he is a very nice man, the Herr Bade-Inspector of the Königliche Badeverwaltung. When I have taken my eighteenpenny bath-ticket, he is at the pains to order that I shall have the grand-ducal bath-room on this occasion, as it is now vacant. This is the first you come to in the long resounding corridor, with a ducal coronet carved over its entrance, with quite a grand anteroom, adorned with flowers and shrubs, and the bath of marble so big that you can almost swim in it.

The bath-master is very cross at having to fill this bath. I fancy he has been disturbed from his afternoon siesta.

"How moch degree?" he asks, as he splashes about with his thermometer, which is let into a long board.

"Oh, ninety," I reply confidently, meaning something very tepid.

The bath-master turns on the hot tap viciously, with gratified resentment glowing in his face.

"But ninety! Mein Gott! You shall be boil!" cried the Herr Inspector. "Twenty-five is moch plenty."

You see, they were working by Réaumur, while my notions were on the Fahrenheit scale, which shows the stupidity of using differing scales of heat. Had a Briton been boiled in consequence, perhaps both prac-

tical and scientific men would have insisted on an international thermometer. But I am thankful not to be made a martyr of science.

"Twenty-five will do very nicely, thank you."

And so the bath-master turns off his taps, and pulling down the blinds with a jerk, takes himself off, to reappear next moment with an iron box, which gives out a glowing heat, and contains towels, and finally disappears.

At twenty-five the water is not much more than tepid, and even feels a little chilly as one descends the marble steps as if going down into the silent tomb; but once beneath the surface—ah, what a delightful sense of warmth, softness, and repose! All the fever and heat of the body disappear, and are replaced by a feeling of languid enjoyment. A soft distilled sunshine dances on the water (is it water or transparent milk?); the splashes echo hollowly from the vaulted roof, mingling their sounds with the rustling of leaves from outside. Then the band begins to play, the notes mellowed by distance. I recognise a solo on the violin. I believe that it is played by the kind man who brought me here, and it seems to congratulate me on being so comfortable.

Yes, I am very happy; my only doubt as to the possibility of falling asleep and getting drowned without knowing it.

At this moment a splendid dragon-fly begins to flit over the water, just as if one were bathing in some woodland pool. It is very charming, and keeps one on the alert, also, as to a possible attack on one's nose, the only point above the water-line. Besides its delightful softness, the water seems endowed with remarkable buoyancy. It is difficult to keep submerged; now an arm, now a leg, rolls like a porpoise to the surface. The bell from the clock-turret overhead sounds first one quarter, and then another, and still I am loath to leave the delightful bath. It seems that I have left all the cares of the world at its enchanted margin. But it is pleasant, too, coming back to the solid world again, to wrap oneself in the enormous hot towel, like a garment, and loll on the grand-ducal sofa till one has energy enough to dress.

Outside, the band is still playing on the terrace, where people are taking their afternoon tea to the sound of soft music; but it is pleasanter here, perhaps, in the quiet, under the long verandah. The white hot road comes winding up from the

panting thirsty land below, takes a sudden turn, and loses itself in a vista of cool woodland. A bullock-waggon comes creaking up, and passes into the grateful shade, or a squad of donkeys in their bright scarlet trappings.

Some steps lead down to a little spout of water that is always running, and to this comes a constant stream of water-carriers—tall graceful maidens, with their bright tin pails, or, better still, with narrow-necked amphoræ of classic shape, and of a pretty gris de Flandres hue, with quaint adornments of dark blue. And the fountain rustles upwards, losing itself in soft showers of spray.

John and his wife now make their appearance from the Kurhaus. Yes, everybody has bathed, and everybody is in a charming humour, Mrs. John especially.

"It isn't a dowdy place, after all, this Schlangenbad. There are toilettes here, if you please, and some really distinguished people—areigning grand duchess, and no end of Russian princesses; and Madame Reimer has found her friends—quite a charming family. We shall not see much more of Madame Reimer now," with a triumphant glance in my direction.

But Madame Reimer presently appears with her friends, who are politely anxious to make our acquaintance.

There is the Comte, elderly, but well preserved, with a youngish wife, who is Madame Reimer's particular friend; a son-in-law, whom we call the Vicomte, faultless in hair and whiskers, Parisian in the cut of his clothes, spotless in expanse of shirt-front and collar and fully-developed wristbands; and then there is the daughter, wife of the last named, who looks sallow and delicate, but who has soft, dark, and sympathetic eyes. These form a group to themselves, for they are almost the only representatives of their nation, not mixing much with the Germans, but coalescing mildly sometimes with the Russians. Especially are they taken up with a small Russian princesskin, a little mite of about eighteen inches high, who generally keeps the crown of the causeway, and is surrounded by a little court of admirers. There is the English governess (the only being of whom the little princess stands in awe, and who seems to rule the household in virtue of her office) and a grim old aunt, who is a grand duchess in her own country, and sundry minor stars.

As for the mother, the head princess, she generally sits apart, smoking her

cigarette, and pouring into the ear of an elderly dame, with a *chevaux de frise* of tow-coloured hair, what is evidently a long catalogue of grievances.

They all have grievances, these princesses, I fancy. The prince is faithless, and runs after strange beauties; he borrows the princessly pin-money, and squanders the princessly dowery; he is a miser at home and squanders his money abroad; in fact, if it were not that the princess enjoyed the luxury now and then of pouring her woes into some friendly ear, her lot would be well-nigh unendurable.

The little princesskin, whose troubles are as yet all in the distant blue, has taken a violent fancy to our old comte, and makes for his knee with an exultant crow whenever she catches sight of him, cutting her way ruthlessly through the attendant guards.

Certainly he has a kind old face, this Monsieur de Beaulieu, and if there is not a vast deal of brain-power in that well-brushed head—his leading idea, apart from family concerns, being that the powers of heaven and earth are gradually coalescing to punish mankind for their indifference to the wrongs of the Comte de Chambord—still, he is so genial and consistent that he reconciles one to the existence of such strange survivals of an antique world. And on one topic the comte and I have a common platform—each has a bad foot, and the comte is never weary of describing his own symptoms, and, to do him justice, of descanting on mine. He ponders on my foot in the silent watches of the night, and sends me little suggestions and messages next morning.

As for the vicomte, there is no doubt that he is seriously struck in the direction of John's wife. Indeed our English princess—princess in right of her lofty carriage and good looks—has made a decided impression here. People unobtrusively make a hedge to see her go past. Their high and mightinesses level their glasses at her; humbler people are content to worship her at a distance. I can enjoy the triumph of my princess, I can worship her serene highness's shoe-tie without any burning resentment at her present neglect of me. When one has a bad foot, the ways of beauty become of less importance than the sympathetic kindness that persons of less brilliant physique have time to show.

Evening comes on pleasantly at Schlangenbad; the sun, as it descends, fills the valley with a rosy glow, while the

shaded wood-paths acquire a soft mysterious gloom. Carriages come softly down the road—nobody trots or gallops into Schlangenbad, but draws up gently, unwilling to disturb the peaceful tranquillity of the place. Carriages also depart with the strangers who have paid us a passing visit; people from Wiesbaden, who have come for the drive and their dinner, and who depart, casting longing, lingering looks behind.

We have missed the table d'hôte, and now hunger asserts its sway, and we meet in the piazza to dine by starlight, and the soft light of the lamps among the trees, to the music of the plashing fountain. Henceforth we are going to live the simple life that befits the place, and so take our leave of luxury in a farewell banquet, accompanied by the Marco-brunner with the blue seal and the tin-foiled bottles in their icy bed. Then, when coffee is brought and cigars are lighted, the ladies expound their views as to the sumptuary laws of the future.

First of all, no late dinners; the table d'hôte at one is an excellent meal, at three shillings a head. On days of extra exertion a light supper is to be allowed, but otherwise only tea in its complete form. And with the early dinner only half a bottle of Rüdesheimer between John and myself. These seem harsh laws, but we recognise their salutary nature, and give the royal assent. Next, as to smoking. Madame Reimer declares emphatically that she will not be answerable for her patients if we smoke so many cigars.

The cigar question is our Irish Land Bill. We fight over it clause by clause; but the ladies display all the patience and obstinacy of a distinguished statesman, and defeat our obstructive tactics. First of all, a cigar after breakfast; that is necessary for digestion, and is allowed without much opposition. But a claim for another at eleven o'clock, while waiting for the bath, is sternly rejected.

A smoke after your bath is a necessity to restore exhausted nature, and is allowed after some difficulty; and the precedent of breakfast is reluctantly admitted to cover the post-prandial cigar. The tea-table again involves a smoke, and if supperless, it would be a cruelty to send us also smokeless to bed. But, with these exceptions, smoking is to be strictly prohibited, and Madame Reimer is to have charge of the cigars, and see that the allowance is not exceeded. Then everybody is to be in bed by ten o'clock, and get up when it pleases

them; and with that our little bill is committed, reported, and passed.

As for the first section of the last clause, that about going to bed, there is no difficulty in carrying it out. Nature asserts herself vigorously at Schlangenbad, and ordains that, with the last twittering of the birds, a sleepy sort of restfulness shall take possession of the frame. No feverish tossings here; no restless longings for morning light. I am awakened in early morning by the songs of birds. Heavens! how charmingly they sing, and never seem to tire! I have heard charming concerts of birds before now at sunrise; but always, when the sun was fairly above the horizon, the choristers have closed their pipes and become silent. But here fresh relays from the forests, perhaps, come to keep up the strain. Anyhow, the birds are singing still when I awake once more, the morning well advanced, and people moving about.

A piano is going somewhere below. Musicians are tuning their instruments; the friendly violin gives a little quaver expressive of gratulation for a good night's rest. A future prima donna is practising her scales afar off. Yet the effect of the whole is reposeful. I doze off, and the band awakes me with a crash. It is seven o'clock, and the theory is that people are walking about and drinking mineral waters at intervals. I don't think they are. I fancy the only people out of bed just now are the musicians themselves, and those who have got to practice things; and, thankful that I have not got to practice anything myself just yet, I sink to sleep again.

At eight I am awake again, and my ears are attracted by a peculiar noise down below, a tap, tap, like the woodpecker tapping the hollow beech-tree. I get up and look out. It is Madame Reimer I see below, who, from her open window, is knocking the dust out of a pair of dainty little shoes.

She is in her white peignoir, with a delicate little cap on her head that perhaps represents a night-cap. She casts a glance upwards as my window creaks, and gives me a cheerful greeting.

"And the foot?" she asks.

"Oh, the foot is doing famously."

"Then don't try it too much," counsels madame sagely.

After this it is time to think of breakfast. We have no bells in our rooms, but one common to the floor at each landing. Two pulls, it is stated, will produce a man; a single one brings a

maiden. What would happen, if anybody got impatient, and rang three, or four, or five times, does not appear. Probably the kingly commissary himself would arrive to remonstrate with the offender. For we are not exactly taking our ease at our inn, you will please observe. We are guests of the State, pensionaries of the King of Prussia.

The old Dukes of Nassau, like many other worthy people of limited means, took to letting lodgings by way of increasing their income, adding by degrees, as business increased, building to building; and they exploited the mineral waters, and dipped their hands into the bath-money, even levying kreutzers on the goats' milk and seltzer-water sold on the terraces. And now that the dukes have been deposed, the King of Prussia, for there is still a King of Prussia under the imperial mantle, carries on the business. And over each doorway is a little black-and-white tablet setting forth the price of the room. And mine, I discover from this record, costs just a shilling a day.

I don't mind a little State restriction if I can get a comfortable well-furnished little room at a shilling a day. For everything is here that I want—my sofa, my writing-table, a dressing-table and washstand, a clothes-press that would hold my wardrobe six times over, an excellent bed—two excellent beds indeed, but the top one I discard and use as a sofa-cushion. There is no carpet indeed, but I don't want one; only if that sybaritic predecessor of mine, who evidently had a carpet of his own and nailed it down—if he had only condescended to pull out his nails when he went away! But that is a trifle; a little experience puts me on my guard. And with all this a share in a dignified porter with a gilt band; also a waiter who skips nimbly upstairs at the sound of the bell, wishes me "Guten morgen" cheerfully, and in less than a brace of shakes reappears with my breakfast; item, a share in a charming little chamber-maiden, with soft rosy cheeks and a limpid smile, also with a cheerful "Guten morgen," who keeps my room in beautiful order without ever disturbing a thing. If with all this I am not well found at a shilling a day, judge ye who patronise grand hotels, or reside temporarily in magnificent mansions.

And now for breakfast, which is brought me on a wooden tray, covered with a cloth of dazzling whiteness, with a napkin to correspond. There is a little teapot, a little milk-pot, a little hotwater-pot, and a little sugar-bowl holding six slabs of sugar all

en suite; my two eggs in egg-cups to correspond; my three little rolls—a round roll, a straight roll, and a curly one; and my one little pat of butter. I think I could eat more if I were put to it; but this is what they call a complete tea "mit two œufs"—they dodge about from German to French, and vice versa, rather perplexingly in their bills—the cost of which is one-and-fourpence; and I fancy that I should have to order another complete tea in order to get at a further supply.

And, after all, a heavy breakfast is a depressing dyspeptic affair; while, as it is, I feel delightfully calm and easy in my mind as I light my first cigar. And then John comes in, attracted, no doubt, by the aroma.

"Lazy beggar!" he cries; "why we breakfasted on the terrace an hour ago!"

"And where's the wife?" I ask.

"Oh," replies John, looking sombre, "she's walking about with those French people. And I tell you what," he added, raising his voice a little, "if that vicomte, as you call him, begins to make love to my wife, as he seems very much inclined to do, I'll—now what would you do under those circumstances, old boy?"

I suggested that he should make love to the vicomtesse by way of reprisals.

John shook his head at this.

"You're about as unprincipled as the vicomte, I'm afraid. No, what I shall do is to punch his head."

That, I pointed out, was a rough brutal proceeding, that effected nothing. And, besides, we were now in a country in which the so-called code of honour was still unrepealed, and to strike a man, and then refuse to give him the chance of letting daylight through you with a rapier or bullet, would be accounted, and perhaps not unjustly, a rather cowardly proceeding.

John could not see that, but he suggested that, to avoid any unpleasantness, perhaps I wouldn't mind giving the vicomte a friendly warning on the subject.

"Goodness, John!" I exclaimed, a good deal upset at the suggestion, "here's the dolce far niente again fairly chucked out of the window!"

FOLLOWED.

A STORY.

TREGONAIN HILL is a grand place whereon to picnic and pasture when the sun is kind and the weather generally merciful; for then, in a clear atmosphere, a goodly portion of the fine old Cornish

land lies mapped out at your feet, and on one side the Atlantic stretches itself away into space. But Tregonain Hill has gruesome suggestions about it when the winds are warring and the waves are raging, when the sea-gulls are circling low and the heavy clouds come down, and seem to march along the earth.

Down in the wooded valley, three miles or more from Tregonain's base, a middle-class farmhouse nestles, surrounded by its barns and cowsheds, its cart-stables, poultry-yard, duck-pond, and prolific orchard. A famous dairy-farm this, tenanted and worked well by Widow Cowels, or "Tabby," as she is called by her familiars in recognition of her right to her christian-name of Tabitha.

Tabby's farm is capitally situated for the disposal of her poultry-yard and dairy produce, for it lies near enough to "Helston Churchtown," as it is called in the vernacular, for Helston's Saturday market to absorb as many chickens and eggs and pounds of butter as she can supply.

For more than fifteen years Tabby has fought the battle of life on her prosperous farm alone, and unassisted by any but hirelings, and she has thriven as she deserves. Her only child, a son, has not taken to the farming. The rude rough life of labour on the soil has had no charm for the delicate lad, who has unconsciously absorbed into his soul all the romance of the land in which he was born. So, sharp as the pinch was to his mother to part with him; disappointing as it was to her that her boy took no interest in the occupation by which they must live; she consented to let him go his own gait many years ago, and apprenticed him, as he desired, to an architect in London.

And now Henry Cowels is coming home for a holiday, to recruit his health and gladden his mother's heart and eyes. He has worked hard and done well, and is a rising man now in his profession, with advanced views as to house architecture and the enterprise to carry them out. The good old mother at the farm-place has no need now to look too closely to her ways and her pennies for the sake of saving them for her absent boy; for this boy is able now to refund her all that he has cost her in money, and he pays back the debt, together with the larger one of love, most liberally.

Perhaps the happiest days Widow Tab has ever known are these in which she is preparing to receive her son and a friend

of his called Scarroll, who is coming down with him. The two "spare chambers," always smelling of cleanliness and dried rose-leaves and lavender, have an extra scrub and polish put upon them, and the whiteness of the sheets and counterpanes are enough to dazzle London smoke-dimmed eyes. The finest, fattest young ducks and chickens are slain, and hang up in the larder, ready to be roasted and put into pies. The most floury potatoes combine their forces with the tenderest beef in pasties, for the benefit of the coming men who haven't tasted a real Cornish "na" for many a long day. The best parlour is artistically decorated with pink perforated paper over the frames of looking-glass and pictures, with feathery asparagus foliage in the grate, and with big bowls full of real old cabbage-roses. The kitchen floor of red brick is made redder, the kitchen pots and pans shine as they have never shone before. And Widow Tab herself looks heartier and happier, more full of energy and enterprise, than she has looked for many a day.

It may be said of the valley farmhouse to-day as Prael sang of Utopia:

The kitchens then had richer roast,
The sheep wore whiter wool

this joyful day, and when the time comes when it would be possible for the travellers to arrive, Widow Tab mounts a gorgeous cap, and generally puts on such war-paint as is calculated to astonish the minds of the unprepared.

The supper-table, set out in the ruddy gleaming kitchen, is just such a bourne as weary travellers rejoice in reaching. Like all good housewives, Mrs. Cowels prides herself on snowy napery, and her good old-fashioned cut glass shines like so many diamonds. All the viands with which the board is spread are the direct and special products of the widow's own industry. The cold saddle of mutton which decorates one end of the table is from a Dartmoor sheep, which, together with eleven of his brethren, took the first prize in the first class at the last Falmouth cattle-show. The ham is a portion of a pig who has been tended from his infancy by her own bountiful hands. The chickens and ducks she has herself superintended closely from the egg period up to the present, when they appear judiciously roasted and admirably browned. So with the bread and cakes; she has grown the corn which has been ground into flour to make them. And

lastly, the strong brown ale of last October's brewing has been brewed by herself.

Bearing the widow company on this happy occasion is a neighbouring farmer's daughter, a pretty berry-brown Cornish lass called Patience Moyle. She is looking forward to Hal Cowels's appearance with blushing pleasure, for in the old days, before he went to London and became, what in their simple-mindedness they consider a great gentleman, Patty Moyle and Widow Tab's boy were sworn friends and allies, and Widow Tab would fain see the old order of things restored, for Patty is by way of being an heiress, it being well known that her father lives well within his income, and that, if he has a penny, he has ten thousand pounds safely lodged in Boletho's bank.

Moreover, Patty is a notable housewife, prudent and methodical, and, at the same time, liberal and hospitable; a girl who would be a fortune in herself to any man whose wife has to look to the ways and means, even if she came to him empty-handed; as it is, a prize of the first order, a wife to be coveted.

Patty has more than a faint idea that some such project is sketchily shadowed forth in the mind's-eye of Widow Tab, and she is not displeased to be the object of a little scheming in such a matter. For Hal Cowels has always been known as a good son, who has remained dutiful, tender, and true to his mother, and to the religious training of his youth, in the midst of the manifold temptations of a successful London life. Everyone, even her own cautious father, says: "Hal will make one of the best of husbands, as he has been one of the best of sons." And this testimony, together with the thought of living in London for a while and seeing a little life, has a charm for the quietly-nurtured country girl, and gives a special interest to the coming events of this evening.

In due time the young men, the son of the house and his friend Scarroll, arrive, and pretty Patty's blushes deepen, and fresh possibilities open themselves out to her view before the evening is over, for Mr. Scarroll is one of those happily-constituted men who, according to the bard, "love all that is lovely, love all that they can," and his admiration is visibly aroused by this fresh young Cornish girl, whose cheeks have been kissed into ripe beauty by the bright sun and sea air.

Scarroll is a gay, light-hearted young fellow, blessed with good health and temper,

and endowed with inexhaustible spirits of the highest order. As his name portends, he is an Irishman, and he has much of the gay glancing humour that is characteristic of the land of love, valour, and wit.

For this evening, indeed for the first few days of their visit, Patty is dazzled. This bright stranger casts into obscurity the more sober friend of her youth, and Hal's mother sees with pain that her boy is outshone, in the eyes of the well-endowed, well-conducted girl, by his friend. She sees something else also, and that is, that Patty is inclined to take the gay fooling for sober earnest, and to give her gold in return for mere dross.

She is a brave old dame, and she has never let a thing go wrong in her upright life if a word in season from her can set it right. She knows that it is worse than useless to go to a daughter of Eve and tell her that the apple she longs to taste will turn to ashes on her lips! The Widow Tab's way is, to go to the root of the evil at once, and that root being the man, she goes to him in all honest confidence.

"Mr. Scarroll," she says, beguiling that easily-beguiled man into the dairy by the treat of a cupful of cream, "it seems to me Hal's not like himself; downcast and gloomy, and irritable, don't care to be consulted about nothing; not a bit like his old happy self!"

Mr. Scarroll had not observed the change, but was distinctly sorry to hear of it, Hal being, in his impressive diction, the "best fellow out."

"That's the way with 'em always," the widow says, dropping confidentially into the vulgar tongue, "when a young woman crosses their path; and it's my belief, Mr. Scarroll (a drop more cream? now, do-e-e), that a young woman have crossed Hal's path, now."

"And not stayed in it, you think."

"Yes, Mr. Scarroll, that's what I, as his mother, do think, and sorry enough I am to think it; he's thinking of Patty, and he doesn't fancy she's thinking of him."

"She'll never find a better fellow to think of," Scarroll says heartily. He likes Patty very much, but he is loyally ready to surrender her to his friend, who has the prior claim. At the same time, he likes Patty with a liking that may easily deepen into something stronger, if loyalty to his friend does not intervene.

"Well, Mr. Scarroll, it's my way to speak out what I feel, and I've been a-feeling this these days past, and now I've spoke

out, I'm the better for it. Hal's not what he was, seems solemn and delicate like, and Patty's not like what she was to Hal."

Scarroll nods his head, and tries to look wise and interested; but he falls short of his noble aim, and only succeeds in looking foolish and embarrassed. He has finished his cream, and apparently the widow has finished her communication. Still, they both loiter on in the dairy. Presently, Mrs. Cowels says:

"It's always my way to speak out my mind to folks, and I like folks who speak out their minds to me."

"And I will speak it out, Mrs. Cowels," Scarroll says gallantly. "I could get to like Patty Moyle better than any girl I've ever seen; but I won't do it, for I think it's gone deeper than that with Hal already, and I'll not cross his path."

So by-and-by Patty finds an undefinable change in Scarroll's manner. A chill creeps into a reserve that the girl feels she has not deserved, and is therefore inclined to resent. Naturally, in her wrath and mortification, there is a reactionary feeling on her part towards Hal. And so the betrothal comes off, after all, quite according to his mother's hopes, and there are stupendous family rejoicings on the occasion. The widow entertains all the Moyle faction, and they reciprocate hospitalities on a scale that causes great devastation in the poultry, and puts the respective dairymaids on their mettle to keep up the supply of cream.

The night before the two young men are to start on their journey back to town, the lovers are standing in the old-fashioned garden, where hedges of sweet peas of every shade, and clumps of stately white lilies, make the air still fragrant though the time of roses is past.

It is a sultry night, rumblings of thunder are heard, and the sky is heavy and lowering. Looking towards Tregonain Hill, they see the black clouds collect about his head, and then detach themselves and seem to fall upon the ground.

"Tregonain's dreadful on a night like this," Patty says with a shudder, but Hal's artist eye is pleased by the rare fantastic effect the monster clouds are making, and he tells the girl that, if it were not sweeter to be by her side than elsewhere in the world, he should start off and walk over Tregonain now.

"I feel drawn to go! Tregonain's like a friend to me, I was born under its shadow,

and it always seems to know me—the dear old hill!" he says enthusiastically.

Then he goes on to whisper to her that, perhaps, in the happy days when the farm in the valley is their country resort—the place to which they will send their children for fresh air and farmhouse diet—he may walk over Tregonain with little feet pattering by his side, and hear little voices raised in praises of the grand old hill.

The day of their departure comes, and about four in the afternoon the two young men, who have sent their luggage on by coach, start on their ten-miles walk to the railway-station. Just as they are starting, Hal announces that he shall make a detour for the sake of walking over Tregonain, and it is in vain that his mother and Patty protest against the plan, pointing out that the walk over Tregonain may make them late for their train, and must add considerably to their fatigue. Hal rejects their kindly counsel with unwonted obstinacy, and carries his friend Scarroll with him.

"Then I'll walk to the foot of Tregonain with you," Patty says; and so she does, and the parting of the lovers takes place at Tregonain's base.

The girl turns sadly and slowly in the direction of the valley farm to find comfort in the society of the mother of the man she loves, and who is to be her husband so soon that she almost wonders at herself for feeling their separation so keenly. And the two young men set off boldly up Tregonain's steep bleak side.

As they reach the top they turn and look behind them on the wild desolate way they have come, and about a hundred yards behind them they see a man. As they turn he turns, remains motionless as long as they do, and when they resume their way he resumes his.

The mountain road grows more and more wild and desolate on the side on which they make their descent, and the sense of being followed pertinaciously plants an unavowed uneasy feeling in both men's breasts. So for an hour at least they go on upon the dreary track, and so unswervingly the form follows them.

At length Hal Cowels pulls up sharply with the exclamation:

"I can't stand this, I'll go back and face him."

"I'll come with you, Hal," Scarroll says buoyantly, but Hal shakes his head and stoutly insists upon going alone.

"I must go back, I can't help myself, and I must go alone," he says.

So Scarroll sits down on a big stone and watches Hal go slowly back to meet the form of the man who is now steadily advancing.

He sees them come close together; meet apparently face to face. Then he rubs his eyes and starts to his feet, for the man who has advanced to meet Hal has disappeared suddenly; vanished as utterly as if the ground had opened and swallowed him up.

At the same time Hal Cowels turns and comes slowly back again, and Scarroll thinks:

"There must be some bush or little chasm that I don't see from here; the other fellow must have hid behind or into something."

Hal's face is ashen in hue when he rejoins his friend, and his eyes have that look of patient hopeless resignation which is so infinitely touching to see. Unwillingly the words:

"Who was it?" fall from Scarroll's lips, and his heart stands still with horror as Hal replies:

"It was myself! Don't look like that, old man, but tell me what you think it means. We've been followed by, and I turned back to meet, myself!"

Who can tell what it was, or what it meant? All that is known is this: that on the day following this his last walk on Tregonain, Hal Cowels's friend takes the train again to Penrhyn, bearing these tidings to the bereaved mother and the broken-hearted bride-elect—that Hal, in leaving the London terminus, has been knocked down and killed by a runaway hansom.

It is not till many months have passed that Patty hears the real truth of that walk over Tregonain. Then she hears from her husband how the doomed man received the warning of his fate.

SOME CURIOSITIES OF CRAM.

IN the abstract, competitive examination is, no doubt, a very good thing, but in practice it proves no exception to the rule that, in this imperfect world, there is no good thing without some accompanying evil. Cram in education is unquestionably an evil, and wherever there is competitive examination there will cram be found also. To a large extent, indeed, "cram" and "competitive examination" are convertible terms. It is chiefly in connection with Civil Service appointments that we hear

of competitive examination, but, as a matter of fact, the principle of the thing enters, nowadays, into nearly all educational work. Our public elementary schools are practically, if not avowedly, organised upon a system of competitive examination—and with some curious results, as we shall presently show.

The system is elaborately set forth in the "Code of Regulations" compiled by "The Right Honourable the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education," and issued by the Education Department for the guidance of all whom it may concern. The government grant of money which a public elementary school may earn, and without the aid of which not one such school in a thousand would be able to keep open, is conditional upon a strict observance of the code, and is proportioned in amount by the number of individual "passes" made by the children of the school in the standards and subjects prescribed by the code. School boards and local managers, as well as the Education Department, estimate the ability of a teacher by the percentage of passes made in his school; and, in the majority of instances, his remuneration is so arranged that the amount is less or more, according to the amount of "grant" earned. As a consequence of this state of affairs, teachers have perforce to become crammers, while children are regarded less as human beings to be educated, in the ordinary acceptance of the word, than as pass-making and grant-earning machines.

The examinations for passes are made by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, and these gentlemen, in their annual reports to "My Lords," frankly condemn the system of which they are themselves part. The general ground of their condemnation is that the system is one of cram; one which overloads the memory with lists of names, dates, and disjointed facts, while leaving the intellectual faculties undeveloped; a system which gives us, as one of the inspectors puts it, "children of christian parents, who have passed many examinations without failure, but who grow up with fewer words than a parrot, so far as understanding them goes." Having regard to the importance of national education, this is a sufficiently serious state of things, but at present we propose to touch only upon the more amusing aspects of the general position. It is chiefly from the latest available reports of Her Majesty's Inspectors—those of 1879-1880—

that we propose to cull our curiosities of Cram.

As specific examples of the general "lack of intelligence" and "blankness of comprehension" of which he complains, one inspector gives the following: "A class of tall girls in Standard Three or Four, in a school in the Forest of Dean, read out a story on 'The Panther,' how two young panthers had been caught in the wilds of Africa, with the frolics and adventures of one of them.

"What is a panther?" I asked. A dead silence, and question repeated, when the tallest scholar suggested "a young man;" and on reference to the top class the same answer was gravely given. In a school near Cardiff, questioning a class of boys on 'the knights sat round the festive bowl,' after infinite pains, the only explanation of 'bowl' to be extracted was, 'what people goes to of a night to dance.'

Domestic economy is one of the subjects in which girls in the upper standards are crammed, and the inspector for one of the metropolitan districts quotes the following answers to questions on this subject:

"Digestion is paines in the head, paines in the stomach, bad tempers."

"From digestion comes consumption, information, headache, neuralgia."

"Infections are brought on by bad smells, such as small-pox, measles, scarlet fever, glass pox, etc.; they are brought on by bad drainerges, suers; they must be well venolated."

"Infection desease are caught by touching such as charcoal, chlorid of lime," etc.

"Fainted. If a person as fainted, take her out in the open air, lay her down with her head. And do the clothing round the neck, and dashed cold water the face and hand, and put smelling sault to her nose."

Speaking more at large, the inspector adds, "I myself know nothing about the 'culinary treatment of food' (Domestic Economy, Second Branch, Third Stage), but by the help of a friend who does, and who has been for years studying by daily experiment how to cook, in the best way, the simple materials on which poor families chiefly live, simple questions of a very practical character have been put to girls who are supposed to have had special instruction in this branch of the subject. I need hardly say that these questions have never been answered, although elaborate paragraphs have been written out about nitrogenous and carbonaceous foods." Upon the same subject another inspector remarks:

"It has not unfrequently been my lot to sit and listen with what patience I can command to an elaborate lesson on ventilation, with learned disquisitions on the properties of air, on draught, up currents, down currents, and all the rest of it, unaccompanied by the slightest effort at practical illustration. On one occasion, when the teacher had been enforcing the absolute necessity of an exit for the impure air, if we had any regard for health and comfort, I saw some of the brighter members of the class glancing round and round the room at the places where ventilators should have been, and were not."

"Literature" is another of the "specific subjects" upon which grants can be earned, and regarding this the metropolitan inspector quoted above, who is more free than most of his brethren in illustrating and supporting his general strictures by particular instances, reports in this wise: "Boys and girls are drilled to repeat long passages of simple poetry with great accuracy and rapidity; but if one after another explains that a hart is 'a kind of rabbit,' that the labouring swain is 'the farm pig what toils about,' that the bending swain is 'a country dandy,' that the knightly ring is a 'thing composed by nights,' that a turret is 'a fire in a blaze,' a battlement 'a place of battle,' and so on, it is evident that we are dealing with a purely mechanical exercise of memory which has no educational value." Among other examples of the literary efforts of children presented in "Literature," the inspector gives the following, premising that the writer of the letter was twelve years of age, had been for six years at the same school, and made three hundred and sixty-five attendances during the last year:

"DEAR SIR,—I write a few line as to soy I Swill be down at Brighton for a day or too hoping yow are quite uill and all the children as I shall be there at 2 P.M. and how his your sister as I here he was very ill indeed and his she bettero . . . she tought about come to Greenwich for a week or two. Have you any work to do not much for Mrs. — is ill and she cannot work So Mr. — is gone forse a trip to sea for a year or two. Now Harry has plenty of work for he is making over time ever night and he earns £2 £10 a week and he gives half of it for my-self now he das lodge at aunts now and boys her 2 shilling a work and now does hi like if he said he his happy now then he was before."

By way of general comment upon all this, the inspector mildly says: "These are sorry 'results' of six years' attendance at costly elementary schools, and I do not think that I judge harshly, or unjustly, if I say that such 'literature' is, in the words of the New Code, 'worthless as a means of education;' yet the specimens which I have copied are by no means unusual samples of children's work. I wish they were."

Science, as taught in elementary schools, and under the Cram system, generally means, so far as the children are concerned, an unintelligent use of a little scientific jargon. Such science, "falsely so called," however, often greatly pleases uneducated or half-educated parents, in whose minds jargon stands as the symbol of science. On this point the inspector for the Durham district gives the subjoined characteristic little story:

"Science, as represented by animal physiology, is not making much progress, but it seems to tickle the fancy of the parents. The following instance of this amiable weakness was related to me by a manager, who soon discovered that the youthful hero of the story was extremely backward in orthography, whatever might be his knowledge of the human frame: 'My boy did so well at his late school,' said the fond mother of this precocious lad; 'it was only the other day he asked me, "Ma, where's your occipital bone?"'"

As an example of the manner in which unrelated facts get jumbled up under the Cram system, one of the inspectors mentions the case of a pupil-teacher, in the fifth year of his apprenticeship, who, being asked to name articles now in common use which were first brought to England in the reign of Elizabeth, answered: "The Thirty-nine Articles, now in common use in the Church of England, were in her reign first brought into England." Knowing something of pupil-teachers; knowing that, by the time they have become "fifth years," many of them are beginning to fancy themselves in the small-joke line, and would consider it a feather in their hats to successfully quiz an examining inspector; knowing this, it has occurred to us, that possibly this particular answer, though reported gravely, was intended as a witticism. If such were the case, it was not a specially brilliant one. There is a certain sound of repartee about it, but it does not go on all-fours. That the Thirty-nine Articles were formulated in the reign of Elizabeth is quite true, but

they were certainly not brought into the country; they were expressly and distinctly home-made. Moreover, they are not in common use; they are in use among a section only of the population.

Of some things we are occasionally told that they manage them better in our colonies than in the "Old Country." It would appear, however, that elementary education is not one of these things. In the New Zealand Educational Blue Book for 1880, the Inspector-General of Schools reports upon, among other things, the examination of candidates for teachers' certificates. The candidates in this examination would, as a rule, have passed through the elementary schools, both as pupils and pupil-teachers, and would have been specially crammed for the certificate "exam."—of which "exam." here are some of the curiosities recorded by the Inspector-General. In the examination in the outlines of English History, candidates were asked to—"Name and characterise the great English statesmen of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries;" and the following specimen of answers are given to illustrate the evils of cram, and want of common sense, of which the inspector complains:

"(1.) 'Pitt, one of the best primers England has seen; Gladstone, Disraeli, Fox, and Sheridan.' (2.) 'Sir G. Grey, W. Fox, Pilchard, Carl Crombie, Murray Fisher.' (3.) 'Shakespeare, Chaucer, William Spenser (Faerie Queane), and Dickens.' (4.) 'From his earliest years Pitt was afflicted with the gout.' (5.) 'Pitt led a chequered life; he was troubled with rheumatics.' (6.) 'Laud, better known as Stafford.' The following are portions of answers given to a question which afforded an opportunity of showing any knowledge the candidates possessed with regard to Milton, the Septennial Act, Glencoe, Laud, the Rump, and the South Sea Bubble. 'Milton was a poet, under William the Fourth. A very good poet, and was liked very much by his friends.' 'Milton, a great poet, translated the Bible.' 'Milton was a philosopher, who did much to increase our knowledge of the laws of nature, notably gravitation.' 'Milton also wrote "Agonistes" and "Samson"; was married twice, and was not lovable to either of his wives.' 'The Septennial Act was passed once in seven years;' 'elected members every five years;' 'was that parliament should be closed seven years;' 'was an Act drawn up to prevent any sovereign

from keeping the meanest subject in prison without bringing them to a fair trial. No more beautiful and perhaps useful lives would be allowed to pine and waste away in damp dungeons,' and so on. 'Glencoe, a Scottish chieftain, who rose in rebellion against the Protestants, and wanted to have Presbyterianism established in Scotland.' 'They rose up in the middle of the Knight, and began their work of Blood.' 'Archbishop Laud, Minister of St. Andrews, and who was murdered by Balfour Burleigh'—'a Royalist general'—'an archbishop. He did much good in promoting Puritanism.' 'The Rump, so called from the Whigs and Tories having had quarrels'—'so called from one of its members.' 'The (South) Sea Bubble is spoken of in history as being similar to a waterspout. . . . Ships have been known to meet this strange sea-bubble, and of course journeys upward with it unless it is foreseen; and, if so, the seamen discharge firearms into it to break or burst. . . . Ships have been carried many miles overland by it. In fact, everything is, as it were, sucked into it.'"

It would be easy, the colonial inspector adds, to multiply instances not less absurd; and by falling back upon the English Blue Books it would be easy for us to largely increase the number of our quotations in this kind. But the curiosities of cram in connection with elementary education show comparatively little variety. Those given here will sufficiently illustrate their general character, and with the examples from abroad cited above our article may fittingly close.

THE QUESTION OF CAIN.

BY MRS. CASHIEL BOEY.

CHAPTER XXVII. EPISODICAL.

ON the day after the little dinner, Mrs. Townley Gore and her young friend were to meet again. They would naturally have a good deal to say to each other. Mrs. Townley Gore would want to discover what impression her brother—whom it was desirable to "steady" by a love-affair of a creditable kind—had made upon Beatrix, and Beatrix would want to find out what impression she had made upon Mr. Horn-dean. Not that Beatrix was in any doubt upon the point. The looks, tone, and manner of her friend's brother had been sufficiently expressive of admiration. But

she would be glad to have her own conviction confirmed, and also to ascertain whether Mrs. Townley Gore was in reality so well disposed as her extreme urbanity of the preceding evening had indicated her to be. As a matter of fact, she was, because she did not care a straw whether her brother merely amused himself with Miss Chevenix—with the result of gaining her affections, and bestowing what he called his own upon some newer object, within an undefined term of delay—or whether the matter took a serious aspect. Of course, Frederick might do a great deal better; but then, he might do worse. On the whole, Mrs. Townley Gore was in a very good humour, as she sat in her morning-room writing her letters, after she had settled her household affairs and put her engagements in order. There was a comfortable smooth-water sense about all her affairs just then, which made her feel benevolently disposed.

Presently her brother made her a pleasant little visit, and that was, in itself, a significant departure from his ordinary ways. They talked of Beatrix, her beauty, her singing, her lively conversation, and her social success.

Mr. Horn-dean was quite animated. The air of boredom and languor which hung about him in general, and was imputed to the lingering results of the fever, was exchanged for the manner that recalled Frederick in his "troublesome" but charming days. The indefinable restraint which, notwithstanding all his hospitality and attention as her host, had marked his intercourse with her at Horn-dean, and restricted their conversation in general to the most ordinary topics, with a careful avoidance of reference to the past, suddenly vanished.

"I am glad you think Miss Chevenix so handsome," said Mrs. Townley Gore. "She is quite my ideal; but I have not found everyone ready to agree with me."

"In her style, she is the finest woman I ever saw. Of course, Lisle put an Italian painter's name to the style. I forget which of the old fellows it was; someone who was great at red hair, and what he calls the 'pearly' tints."

"Does Mr. Lisle admire her very much?"

"Yes; but he is so critical. He never lets one forget that there are spots in the sun. There is not one in Miss Chevenix's complexion, as I remarked to him. He acknowledges that is her strong point, but he will have it that her eyes are not far

enough apart, and that they are shallow, that her mouth is hard, and that there is a want of soul about her."

Mrs. Townley Gore smiled. She was not displeased that her brother's friend was less captivated by Beatrix than her brother.

"She certainly is not sentimental, if he means that," she remarked. "He must only tone down those defects in the portrait he is to paint at Horndean."

"There's a great deal of aplomb about her—all the manner of a woman of the world."

"Precisely what she is, my dear Frederick. Beatrix Chevenix would adorn any position. I thought, yesterday, when she told me how the duchess dressed her up in her diamonds, that she must have become them 'bravely'; and if they never turn up again they will have made a good end. Nothing more of the diamonds, I suppose, in the papers this morning?"

"Nothing. It was what they call a put-up business, no doubt."

"Beatrix will be full of it, when I see her to-day. I daresay she will have heard of the affair direct from the duchess."

At this point, Mr. Townley Gore entered the room, and Mr. Horndean, having ascertained that his sister and Miss Chevenix would be in the park at five o'clock, took his leave.

Mr. Townley Gore did not seem to be in very good spirits, and he did seem to have a little difficulty in entering on the matter in hand.

His wife saw that he had something special to say, and went to the point at once.

"Anything wrong?"

"No, not exactly; but I have a letter from Mr. Simpson, which I thought you had better see."

"What on earth has he to write to you about? No new folly of Frederick's, I hope!"

"No, nothing to do with Frederick. Mr. Simpson writes to enquire about Helen Rhodes."

With an impatient exclamation and a black frown, Mrs. Townley Gore took the letter from her husband's hand. It consisted of a few lines only, in which the writer stated that, having his attention called to certain matters relating to the affairs of his late client, the Rev. Herbert Rhodes, he was anxious to ascertain where Miss Rhodes was at present, and what was her actual position. Referring to the statement made by Mr. Townley Gore on

a former occasion, of his purpose with regard to Miss Rhodes, Mr. Simpson had recourse to him to obtain those particulars.

"I do not see why you should have thought it necessary for me to see this letter," said Mrs. Townley Gore, as she threw it on the table. "The subject of Miss Rhodes is highly distasteful, and you could have replied to Mr. Simpson, if you thought proper, without referring to me."

"Perhaps so; but I considered it wiser to consult you. It does not do to shirk distasteful subjects always; and I feel that this one has been shirked too long. I cannot answer these questions without making myself acquainted with the facts, and I think an enquiry into them would come better from you than from me."

"I do not know what you mean."

"I mean, Caroline, that I want you to write to the person with whom that poor girl is, and ask for her. Your enquiry may be as formal as you please."

It was very rarely that Mrs. Townley Gore gave way to her temper when her husband was in question; she was too wisely considerate of her own comfort; but this was one of those rare occasions. In an instant the elegant composure of her manner vanished, her features flushed with anger, and she answered in a raised and tremulous tone.

"I shall do nothing of the sort, and I wonder you venture to ask me. I wonder you name that person in my hearing. 'Poor girl,' indeed! You must have a great deal of pity to spare if you bestow any on so ungrateful and undeserving an object."

"I am sorry you take the matter in that way, Caroline," said Mr. Townley Gore, "for it is one in which there were faults on both sides. One fault was mine. I did not tell you of poor Helen's appeal to me against your treatment of her—treatment which drove her to the step she took; and I did not insist on your altering it, as I ought to have done."

Mrs. Townley Gore's astonishment was almost equal to her rage. The subject of Helen Rhodes had been dismissed by tacit consent after they received the false explanation of her flight, and neither had any reason to suppose that the other ever bestowed a thought upon it. That her husband should take this turn, that he should talk to her about "faults" and "insisting" was something new indeed, and it hardened her heart still more against Helen.

The violent effort by which she restrained herself was aided by her sheer surprise.

"I neither know nor desire to know what you are talking about," said she with recovered calm, "and I beg the matter may never be mentioned to me again. I decline to discuss Miss Rhodes, her conduct, or her position."

"As you please. I shall write to her friend myself, and I hope there may be some motive for Mr. Simpson's question that means good to come from somewhere to her. Be so kind as to give me the address of Madame——"

"Morrison, milliner and dressmaker—the individual whom Miss Rhodes selected to replace you as her protector. I never pretended to be anything of the sort. That is her address, and now I beg that I may hear no more of the matter."

With ostentatious insolence, Mrs. Townley Gore resumed the writing of her letters, and her husband, after one steady look at her, which might have conveyed a warning had she seen it, left the room.

"She is growing positively plain!" Such was Mr. Townley Gore's first reflection. "I had not noticed before how much her violent temper tells on her looks."

The mood in which Miss Chevenix found herself on the day after the little dinner at the Townley Gores was as cheerful as that of her friend. She was in the habit of studying her looks at some length of mornings, and on this particular morning her looking-glass gave her the pleasantest assurances. Her eyes were bright, her skin was fair, health and vitality in their beautiful perfection were displayed in her face, her form, and her movements. She admired herself with a sort of abstract and impartial sincerity, as she leaned back in her chair and rested her finely-formed, large arm, tired with the unaccustomed exercise of brushing the hair that hung over her shoulders, a glittering redly-golden mantle. She was up early, as usual, and though it was a bore to be without a maid, she had declined the services of Mrs. Mabblerley's attendant. Somehow, Beatrix was always glad when she could decline any offer, or traverse any arrangement made by Mrs. Mabblerley. Either of those opportunities occurred but seldom; there was a quiet strength of will, and an unalterable fixedness of purpose about the insignificant-looking, low-voiced mistress of the house which Beatrix called home, and to those two qualities Miss

Chevenix, whose passions were stronger than her mind, almost always yielded. The restraint of which she was conscious had not yet become intolerable; perhaps, because she had been a good deal away; but it had deepened her dislike of Mrs. Mabblerley into aversion, that would, had any stimulant been wanting, have supplied her with superhuman resolution to achieve her independence. The two ladies behaved to each other with perfect courtesy; not the most inquisitive domestic detective could have discovered a flaw in their relations. Mrs. Mabblerley's household was a model of decorum, and Mrs. Mabblerley, herself, was a happy example of the "*juste milieu*." Family prayer was as fixed an institution as breakfast, and every individual in the house, except Beatrix, went to church at least once on Sundays. Mrs. Mabblerley did not, however, belong to any of the subdivisions of the so-called religious world; the ritualist with the aureole of unrighteous imprisonment on his pale brow; the per-fervid professor of new lights, with an astonishing "reading" of the plainest-spoken texts of Holy Writ; the liberal and enlightened divine, who has expanded in one direction, and whittled away in another, until old-fashioned people find the faith of the day as little to their liking as its morals or its manners, were never "lionised" by Mrs. Mabblerley. She was "so well-regulated," people said; and hers was "such a nice house for one's girls to go to," was observed by mothers who still retained the belief that discrimination in such matters was a duty. To one of these mothers, who ventured to comment on the fact that Mrs. Mabblerley's dear interesting young friend never went to church, and made no secret of her free-thinking, she made an answer which raised her a degree in the hearer's estimation.

"Dear Mrs. Roxley," said she, "we must never forget that poor Beatrix had not our advantages of bringing up; nor such training as your sweet girls enjoy. This thought should render us so indulgent. Do you not think so? And with time and good example there is much to hope."

This skilful avoiding of the charge of inconsistency would give the measure of Mrs. Mabblerley's tact. Things had hitherto gone quite smoothly between her beautiful guest and herself; the only strain of the chain that connected them occurred when Mrs. Townley Gore's invitation clashed with certain previously-formed plans of Mrs. Mabblerley's. On that occasion she

kept Miss Chevenix in suspense for a whole week, and at the end of it told her, without vouchsafing any explanation of the delay, that she might make her arrangements to go to Horndean in September.

This promised visit was engaging Miss Chevenix's thoughts very pleasantly; she had found Mrs. Townley Gore's brother much more agreeable than she expected, and she had thoroughly enjoyed the consciousness that he was captivated by her. Altogether things looked very well, if only the odious interval were over. The prayer-bell rang, unheard by Beatrix. She went on languidly brushing her hair, and after a short interval her letters were brought to her room. A three-cornered note was on the tray; it contained a line from Mrs. Mabblerley.

"I have to go out on business this morning, and do not expect to get back until late. I have promised for you that you will come with me to dine at the Ramsdens."

"How horribly provoking!" said Beatrix half aloud, as she tore the paper with the cruel action of the fingers peculiar to her. This dinner engagement came most inconveniently. She had been speculating on Mrs. Townley Gore's proposing some impromptu amusement for that evening. Mr. Horndean was in just the state of mind that leads to schemes of the kind, and she especially hated to have to pass an evening in the house that had been her own.

The next letter was from the Duchess of Derwent, and it, too, disturbed Miss Chevenix's composure very strongly.

"Have you the evil eye, dear Beatrix," wrote the duchess, "and did you cast a spell on the diamonds that became you so well? I am sure you are sorry for me. You will see by the papers how cleverly the robbery was done. The police are active, of course, but I never expect to see the diamonds again."

Beatrix rang her bell, and desired that yesterday's newspapers should be brought to her. In the evening journals were detailed accounts of the great jewel robbery at Derwent Castle. It had taken place three days after the termination of her stay at the castle; was supposed to be the work of one person, as only one stranger had been observed about the place; and had been effected with extraordinary coolness, daring, and success; the lock of the duchess's

jewel-case having been dexterously picked, and the diamonds abstracted, without apparent injury to the box. Access to the room had been gained by a workman's ladder, which was left standing against the wall beneath the open window. The only evidence concerning this was that of two of the duchess's children and their nursery governess; a man had passed them in the shrubbery carrying a ladder; he was not one of the gardener's assistants, and the children had never seen him before.

Beatrix was horrified. She estimated the duchess's feeling rather by her own appreciation of the delights of possessing diamonds, than by that of her friend, but, to even the most careless of such things, the loss was a very serious one. It was rarely that Beatrix sought the presence of Mrs. Mabblerley, when she had an excuse for avoiding it, and she never joined her at breakfast; but, this morning, she went downstairs so soon as she was dressed, with the newspapers and the duchess's letter in her hand, and found Mrs. Mabblerley breakfasting sedately in solitude. She had not chanced to notice the account of the robbery, she rarely read the records of crime; but she displayed what, for her, was interest, in Beatrix's story, and in her description of the beauty and value of the diamonds. She had never chanced to hear the Duchess of Derwent mentioned as the possessor of remarkable jewels. Mrs. Mabblerley feared that the duchess was right, that she would never see the diamonds again. She herself had been robbed of jewels (of course quite insignificant in comparison with such a loss as the duchess's), and all the efforts of the police to trace them had failed. "Though it was not so cleverly done as this," added Mrs. Mabblerley, "which is evidently a long-planned put-up thing; for that, I believe, is the phrase they use in their odious jargon, when they mean that a robbery is done with the connivance of people in the house."

"Oh, do you think so?" objected Beatrix; "the duchess's people are all so devoted to her."

Mrs. Mabblerley smiled, and Beatrix saw that she, being busy, had had enough of the duchess and her diamonds.

Mrs. Townley Gore had a good deal to say about them when she and Beatrix met. She had got over her ill-humour by that time; she was very pleasant about Beatrix's conquests of the previous evening, and she remarked, before the carriage turned into the park, that one of the advantages of the

end of the season was, that one could make a plan on an impulse, and had not all one's time laid out like a chess-board. She had promised Frederick that they would do something that evening—Richmond, perhaps, or Twickenham—and she laid an embargo on her friend accordingly. Then Beatrix had to explain, with genuine vexation, that she was not free to accept so charming an invitation, and she was puzzling Mrs. Townley Gore very much by her uncharacteristic yielding to Mrs. Mabberley's behest, when they came in sight of Mr. Horndean and Mr. Lisle, who were on the watch for them. The victoria was drawn up under the trees, and the two gentlemen entered into animated talk with its occupants; Mr. Horndean, who stood with his back to the footpath, protesting with all the earnestness that Beatrix could desire, against her cruel decision and the overthrow of his hopes.

Frank Lisle, talking to Mrs. Townley Gore on the other side of the carriage, paused and looked curiously after a man who passed on the footpath. The man was tall, strongly built, fashionably dressed, with nothing remarkable about him, except that he wore his hair rather long. His eyes and complexion were dark.

Mrs. Townley Gore, observing Mr. Lisle's gaze, glanced at its object, and asked him who was the person that had caught his attention.

"Not a person, but a resemblance," he answered. "I never saw one more striking. That man might have sat for my portrait of the organ-grinder whom I found asleep under the big tree on the green at Horndean. I had sketched him comfortably before he woke up and expressed himself in disobliging terms respecting my eyes and my impudence. It is quite extraordinary. They might be twins. I hope he will come this way again, and you will see it."

The object of Mr. Lisle's remarks did not come that way again, and the ladies drove on presently, leaving Mr. Horndean to all the discontent into which a contradiction was wont to plunge him.

When Madame Morrison received the civil letter in which Mr. Townley Gore

requested her to inform him whether Miss Rhodes was with her, and made a polite, if cold, enquiry after Helen's health and general welfare, she was troubled. She had expected and desired some such enquiry; but, now that it had come, she was perplexed by it. If the way to a reconciliation with the Townley Gores, and a restoration of Helen to their protection and her legitimate position in society, could be opened by this means, it would be the right thing; and yet Madame Morrison shrank from the idea. Helen was improving; her mind was less disturbed, her heart was more at ease; here would be the renewal of suffering for her. But her future? Madame Morrison, unaware that Mr. Townley Gore's enquiry was not due to the unaided promptings of his own conscience or his own feelings, very naturally expected that it would have some further result; and she therefore thought it right to inform Helen that the enquiry had been made before she replied to it.

Helen received the communication with great emotion, and learned with downright terror that Madame Morrison expected it might have consequences. She protested so strongly that she never could face either Mr. or Mrs. Townley Gore again, with the burthen of her secret to make everything so much more dreadful than before; she so earnestly entreated Madame Morrison to answer the questions as briefly as possible; she was made so ill by the incident, that Madame Morrison gave up the attempt to persuade her. She wrote to Mr. Townley Gore that Miss Rhodes was residing with her, and was in good health.

Mr. Townley Gore communicated the reply to Mr. Simpson almost as curtly, and there the matter ended.

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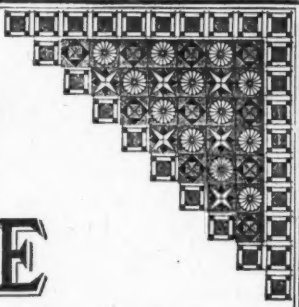

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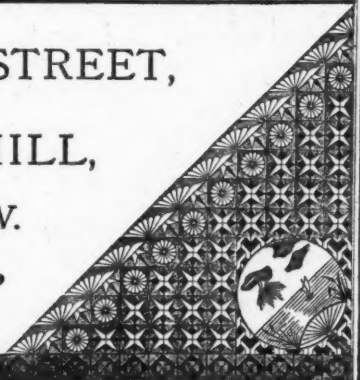
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Report of Directors

JANUARY 26, 1881.

THE DIRECTORS are gratified in being able to report that the transactions of the past year have been eminently successful.

The NEW PREMIUMS amount to £18,845 (including £822 special single payments) as against £15,172 for the preceding year. There were issued 944 NEW POLICIES, assuring £544,841: 74 PROPOSALS were declined for assurances amounting to £75,805.

The CLAIMS by death were £133,854, being £9,396 less than the amount for the preceding year.

The INCOME has increased by £6,168, and now amounts to £279,852. The INVESTED FUNDS on the 31st of December, 1880, were £2,124,711, having been increased by the sum of £47,496 during the year. The average rate of INTEREST realised was £4 6s. per cent., as against £4 5s. for 1879.

The general EXPENSES OF MANAGEMENT, including Commission, notwithstanding the largely increased new business and augmented income, are £1,203 less than the amount for 1879.

It is with considerable satisfaction the Directors are able to report that upon every main item in the past year's accounts continued progress and improvement is shown. They attribute in some degree the success of the past year as due to the beneficial results now arising to sound and well-established Life Offices, through the publication of Accounts and Statements required by the Life Assurance Companies' Act—a result anticipated by the Directors and referred to on more than one occasion in their previous Reports.

KINNAIRD, *Chairman.*

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